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1

HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, On February 9, 1864 the largest mass prisoner of
3 war escape in American history took place; led by Colonel
4 Thomas Rose of the 77th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, 109
5 Union officers tunneled out of the Confederacy's infamous Libby
6 Prison in Richmond; this escape would dwarf the better known
7 Great Escape of World War II, in which 76 POWs tunneled out of
8 Stalag Luft III; the escape out of Libby Prison hastened the
9 transfer of prisoners to sites further south, including what
10 would become Andersonville Prison; and

11 WHEREAS, Libby Prison was considered second only to
12 Andersonville for its inhumane conditions, and the officers
13 imprisoned there began searching for ways to escape the instant
14 they arrived; Rose and a companion, Captain Andrew Hamilton of
15 the 12th Kentucky Cavalry, met in a basement area of the prison
16 known as Rat Hell while both were searching for possible escape
17 routes; the name Rat Hell came from the thousands of rats that
18 inhabited the area; the two decided the area was perfect for
19 tunneling; and

20 WHEREAS, To reach Rat Hell, it was necessary to enter
21 through a fireplace in a kitchen area on the first floor; this
22 limited the tunneling effort to those few hours late at night
23 when nobody was in the kitchen; access was gained by removing

1 stones from the firebox of the fireplace, squeezing through the
2 wall, and dropping into the basement; a rope was used to return
3 when the night's tunneling was completed; and

4 WHEREAS, Using only rudimentary tools such as an old spoon
5 and a broken chisel, the tunnel was dug toward a vacant lot
6 across the street from the prison; a rubber blanket was
7 fashioned into a bellows, although that had limited success and
8 nearly every digger came out of the tunnel violently ill from
9 the lack of air; even their candles could not be kept lit; dirt
10 was hauled from the tunnel in an old spittoon and scattered
11 among the straw of Rat Hell; and

12 WHEREAS, Initially Rose and Hamilton worked alone, but when
13 Rose became wedged inside the wall and was in danger of
14 suffocation, it became necessary to recruit a third man to help
15 pull him out; he obviously wanted to know why Rose was inside
16 the wall, and after being sworn to secrecy, he became part of
17 the escape effort; as the tunnel progressed it became
18 increasingly necessary to add people, and ultimately a team of
19 15 prisoners took part in the digging; and

20 WHEREAS, The story is one of perseverance and
21 determination, as several tunnels failed for various reasons;
22 each tunnel failure spawned a new start, and even the
23 successful tunnel had its problems; the tunnel finally broke

1 through on February 8, 1864, and the escape was set for the
2 next night; and

3 WHEREAS, With the 109 escapees through, daybreak made it
4 too dangerous for any more prisoners to escape; the tunnel was
5 left for the next night, with more prisoners planning to make
6 their exit; however, the tunnel was discovered before any
7 further attempts could be made; and

8 WHEREAS, Of those who escaped, most were bitten by the rats
9 in Rat Hell; 48 were successful in reaching Union lines; two
10 drowned in the Chickahominy Swamp and 59 were recaptured,
11 receiving varying degrees of punishment on their return to
12 Libby; because he was the leader, Rose was placed in a dungeon
13 where the water from the James River came in at high tide, and
14 when he was finally released his clothing and beard were
15 covered with mold; and

16 WHEREAS, Libby Prison was converted to a prison for
17 Confederates when the Union captured Richmond, eventually
18 returned to its original use as a warehouse, and was moved to
19 Chicago in 1887 where it became a centerpiece for the World's
20 Fair; it has since been demolished, with many of the bricks
21 used in the construction of the Chicago Coliseum and the Civil
22 War room of the Chicago Historical Society; and

23 WHEREAS, Participants in the escape include:

1 OHIO:

2 ADAMS, WESLEY R., Captain, 89th Ohio Infantry, Company K. BOYD,
3 JOSEPH FULTON, Lieutenant Colonel, 20th Army Corps, BROWN,
4 JAMES P., 2nd Lieutenant, 15th U. S. Infantry, Company F,
5 CALDWELL, DAVID S., Captain, 123rd Ohio Infantry, Company H,
6 GALLAGHER, JOHN, Captain, 2nd Ohio Infantry, Company B, GATES,
7 JUNIUS, Captain, 33rd Ohio Infantry, Company K, HARRIS, DAVID
8 H., 2nd Lieutenant, 3rd Ohio Infantry, Company E, HAYES, EDWIN
9 L., Lieutenant Colonel, 100th Ohio Infantry, HENRY, JOHN,
10 Major, 5th Ohio Cavalry, HIGBY, EDGAR J., 2nd Lieutenant, 33rd
11 Ohio Infantry, Company C, McDONALD, BEDAN B., Major, 101st Ohio
12 Infantry, RANDALL, WILLIAM S. B., Captain, 2nd Ohio Infantry,
13 Company C, RAY, THOMAS J., 1st Lieutenant, 49th Ohio Infantry,
14 Company K, ROSSMAN, WILLIAM C., Captain, 3rd Ohio Infantry,
15 Company F, SCOTT, EDWARD S., 2nd Lieutenant, 89th Ohio
16 Infantry, Company G, SUTHERLAND, LEWIS, 1st Lieutenant and
17 Adjutant, 126th Ohio Infantry, THOMAS, John W., 1st Lieutenant
18 and Adjutant, 2nd Ohio Infantry, WALLACE, R. P., 2nd
19 Lieutenant, 120th Ohio Infantry, Company E, WASSON, JOHN, 2nd
20 Lieutenant, 40th Ohio Infantry, Company G, WILLIAMS, WILLIAM
21 A., 2nd Lieutenant, 123rd Ohio Infantry, Company H; and

22 ILLINOIS:

23 BASSETT, MARK M., 1st Lieutenant, 53rd Illinois Infantry,
24 Company E, CLARK, TERRENCE, Captain, 79th Illinois Infantry,
25 Company A, CRAWFORD, HENRY B., 1st Lieutenant, 2nd Illinois

1 Cavalry, Company M, EARLE, CHARLES W., 2nd Lieutenant, 96th
2 Illinois Infantry, Company C, HANDY, THOMAS, Captain, 79th
3 Illinois Infantry, Company F, HATFIELD, JOHN D., 1st
4 Lieutenant, 53rd Illinois Infantry, Company H, McKEAN,
5 NINEOCH, 1st Lieutenant, 21st Illinois Infantry, Company H,
6 MORTON, CHARLES H., Lieutenant Colonel, 84th Illinois
7 Infantry, ROGERS, ANDREW F., Lieutenant Colonel, 80th Illinois
8 Infantry, ROWAN, CHARLES E., Captain, 96th Illinois Infantry,
9 Company F, SCHROEDTER, HUGO, 2nd Lieutenant, 82nd Illinois
10 Infantry, Company F, SCUDMORE, GOODWIN, 1st Lieutenant, 80th
11 Illinois Infantry, Company A, WILKINS, JAMES E., Captain, 112th
12 Illinois Infantry, Company I; and

13 NEW YORK:

14 BEADLE, MARCUS, 1st Lieutenant, 123rd New York Infantry,
15 Company I, CHAMBERLAIN, HENRY B., Captain, 97th New York
16 Infantry, Company I, HAUF, ADAM, 1st Lieutenant, 45th New York
17 Infantry, Company H, IRSCH, FRANCIS, Captain, 45th New York
18 Infantry, Company D, JOHNSON, ISAAC, Engineer, U. S. S.
19 Satellite, MORAN, FRANK, 2nd Lieutenant, 73rd New York
20 Infantry, Company H, SEELEY, HORACE B., 2nd Lieutenant, 86th
21 New York Infantry, Company K, SPOFFORD, JOHN P., Lieutenant
22 Colonel, 97th New York Infantry, STARR, GEORGE H., Captain,
23 104th New York Infantry, Company D, WILCOX, W. H. H., 1st
24 Lieutenant and Adjutant, 10th New York Infantry; and

1 INDIANA:

2 BOYD, MATTHEW, Captain, 73rd Indiana Infantry, Company B,
3 COLLINS, JOSEPH P., Major, 29th Indiana Infantry, FISLAR, JOHN
4 C., 1st Lieutenant, Indiana Light Artillery, 7th Battery,
5 FITZSIMMONS, GEORGE W., Major, 30th Indiana Infantry,
6 FLANSBURG, DAVID S., Captain, 4th Indiana Independent Battery,
7 Lt. Artillery, FOSTER, ELI, 2nd Lieutenant, 30th Indiana
8 Infantry, Company G, MOORE, McCASLIN, Captain, 29th Indiana
9 Infantry, Company D, MULL, DANIEL H., Captain, 73rd Indiana
10 Infantry, Company A, PHELPS, ITHAMER D., Captain, 73rd Indiana
11 Infantry, Company K, REYNOLDS, WILLIAM, 1st Lieutenant, 73rd
12 Indiana Infantry, Company K, SCEARCE, WILLIAM W., Captain, 51st
13 Indiana Infantry, Company K, SIMPSON, JOHN D., 1st Lieutenant,
14 10th Indiana Infantry, Company H, STERLING, JOHN, 1st
15 Lieutenant, 30th Indiana Infantry, Company A, STREIGHT, ABEL
16 D., Colonel, 51st Indiana Infantry, WALKER, IRVIN T., Major,
17 73rd Indiana Infantry, WALLICK, WILLIAM, Captain, 51st Indiana
18 Infantry, Company G, WILLIAMS, LEANDER, 2nd Lieutenant, 73rd
19 Indiana Infantry, Company K; and

20 TENNESSEE:

21 BRADFORD, ROBERT Y., 1st Lieutenant, 2nd West Tennessee Cavalry
22 Company B, HAGLER, JACOB S., Captain, 5th Tennessee Infantry,
23 Company F, KENDRICK, W. P., Colonel, 3rd West Tennessee
24 Cavalry; and

1 PENNSYLVANIA:

2 CUMMINGS, THOMAS, Captain, 19th U. S. Infantry, Company A,
3 DAILY, WILLIAM A., 1st Lieutenant, 8th Pennsylvania Cavalry,
4 Company H, DAY, ROBERT H., Captain, 56th Pennsylvania Infantry,
5 Company D, EDMONDS, CHARLES L., 1st Lieutenant, 67th
6 Pennsylvania, Company D, GAMBLE, SAMUEL, 1st Lieutenant, 63rd
7 Pennsylvania Infantry, Company D, GARBET, DAVID, 2nd
8 Lieutenant, 77th Pennsylvania Infantry, Company G, GAY,
9 FREEMAN C., 2nd Lieutenant, 11th Pennsylvania Infantry,
10 Company K, GOOD, GEORGE S., 1st Lieutenant, 84th Pennsylvania
11 Infantry, Company I, HINDS, HENRY H., 1st Lieutenant, 57th
12 Pennsylvania Infantry, Company A, MILES, DAVID, Lieutenant
13 Colonel, 79th Pennsylvania Infantry, RANDOLPH, WALLACE F., 1st
14 Lieutenant, 5th U. S. Artillery, Battery L, ROSE, THOMAS
15 ELLWOOD, Colonel, 77th Pennsylvania Infantry, SCHROEDERS,
16 EDGAR, 2nd Lieutenant, 74th Pennsylvania Inf., Co. D, VON
17 MITZEL, ALEXANDER T., Major, 74th Pennsylvania Infantry,
18 WHITE, PLYMPTON, 2nd Lieutenant, 83rd Pennsylvania Infantry,
19 Company D. WHITE, ALBERT BENTON, 1st Lieutenant, 4th
20 Pennsylvania Cavalry, Co. F. FISHER, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, Major,
21 U. S. Signal Corps. GAGEBY, JAMES H., 2nd Lieutenant, 19th U.
22 S. Infantry, Company A; and

23 MAINE:

24 DAVIS, GEORGE C., Captain, 4th Maine Infantry, Company F.
25 TILDEN, CHARLES W., Colonel, 16th Maine Infantry; and

1 CONNECTICUT:

2 ELY, WILLIAM GROSVENOR, Colonel, 18th Connecticut Infantry;
3 and

4 RHODE ISLAND:

5 FALES, JAMES M., 2nd Lieutenant, 1st Rhode Island Cavalry,
6 Company D; and

7 NEW JERSEY:

8 GALLAGHER, MICHAEL, Captain, 2nd New Jersey Cavalry, Company H;
9 and

10 MICHIGAN:

11 GREBLE, CHARLES E., 1st Lieutenant, 8th Michigan Cavalry,
12 Company E, McCREERY, WILLIAM B., Colonel, 21st Michigan
13 Infantry, WELLS, JAMES M., 2nd Lieutenant, 8th Michigan
14 Cavalry, Company F; and

15 WISCONSIN:

16 HOBART, HARRISON C., Lieutenant Colonel, 21st Wisconsin
17 Infantry, MORGAN, CHARLES H., 1st Lieutenant, 21st Wisconsin
18 Infantry, Company F, WALLBER, ALBERT, 1st Lieutenant, 26th
19 Wisconsin Infantry, Company I, WATSON, WILLIAM L., 1st
20 Lieutenant, 21st Wisconsin Infantry, Company G, WEST, THEODORE
21 S., Lieutenant Colonel, 24th Wisconsin Infantry; and

1 KENTUCKY:

2 HAMILTON, ANDREW G., Captain, 12 Kentucky Cavalry, Company A,
3 JOHNSTON, I. N., Captain, 6th Kentucky Infantry, Company H,
4 JONES, DAVID, Captain, 1st Kentucky Infantry, Company D, LUCAS,
5 JOHN, Captain, 5th Kentucky Infantry, Company F, MOORES,
6 ARCHIBALD, 1st Lieutenant, 4th Kentucky Mounted Infantry, Co.
7 E, PIERCE, WILLIAM P., Captain, 11th Kentucky Cavalry, Company
8 A; and

9 MASSACHUSETTS:

10 HOOPER, J. HARRIS, Major, 15th Massachusetts Infantry, TOWER,
11 MORTON, 1st Lieutenant, 13th Massachusetts infantry, Company
12 B; and

13 MARYLAND:

14 SMALL, MELVILLE R., 1st Lieutenant, 6th Maryland Infantry,
15 Company H; and

16 MISSOURI:

17 ROSE, GOTTLIEB C., Captain, 4th Missouri Cavalry, Company C;
18 and

19 STATE OF RESIDENCY UNKNOWN:

20 BENNETT, FRANK T., 2nd Lieutenant, 18th U. S. Regulars, Company
21 F, SMITH, EDMUND L., Captain, 19th U. S. Infantry, Company G,

1 and URQUHART, SAMUEL A., Captain, C.S., 6th Corps ; therefore,
2 be it

3 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
4 NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
5 take a moment to remember the story of the brave soldiers who
6 escaped from Libby Prison during the Civil War.